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The Semi-Centennial History of West Virginia. By James Morton Callahan, Professor of History and Political Science, West Virginia University. Published by the Semi-Centennial Commission of West Virginia, 1913. Pp. x + 595.

This book of nearly six hundred pages is almost equally divided between the history proper and special articles on the Development and Resources of the state. Being a semi-centennial history it necessarily covers the period previous to the declaration of statehood. It opens with a brief discussion of the physical features of the land, the difficulties encountered in its settlement, and the beginnings of the social and industrial life of the sparse communities. A short account of the natural highways of the state introduces quite an interesting and detailed chapter on the first railroad. From 1827, capitalists of Baltimore tried to gain from Maryland and Virginia a right of way to permit them to push forward the first railroad across the mountains to the Ohio River. The halting progress of their undertaking is in itself interesting to follow, but it gains additional interest because its history is bound up with the sectional feeling that for years had been growing up between the inhabitants of Virginia on either side of the Blue Ridge Mountains. This feeling was so pronounced that the western counties had suggested their separation from the Old Dominion and their acknowledgment as a new state. The crisis was precipitated by the withdrawal of the state of Virginia from the Union in 1861. The western counties through conventions set themselves up as the loyal state of Virginia gained recognition from Congress, and secured the consent of that body to separate from Virginia and enter the Union as the State of West Virginia. This was brought to pass June 20, 1863. Virginia and the Confederacy made attempts to win back the state by military operations along strategic points but failed. The final cessation of hostilities raised bitter political strife anent limitation of suffrage and exaction of test oaths from those who had served in the Confederate armies, and brought other problems of civic reconstruction which ultimately found expression in the revision of the constitution, effected in 1872.

The post-bellum history, which is precisely the history of the state, moves with such rapidity that the limits of this semi-centennial history permit but a mere chronicling of events: there is a paragraph of projected lines of progress which were never realized, and the rest is a reiterated record of mile after mile of railway lines laid along the valleys reaching into the heart of the coal regions and the lumber camps and the oil fields.

This meant growth in population, as set forth in the statistical

chapter on Social and Institutional History. In the section devoted to Educational Development attention is paid only to State work. Not a word appears relative to the work of the several religious centers of learning and their local lower-graded schools. The reader is forced to turn to the special articles on Churches and Educational Progress and here he finds that five of the largest bodies are adequately dealt with and that influential schools are merely mentioned. In the third section Institutions for Dependents, Defectives, and Delinquents, the orphan asylums receive no notice, so that the labors of Catholic, Protestant and Hebrew in this direction receive no credit; no reference is made to the work of the Good Shepherd nuns, the Homes and Industrial Schools which Catholics have for years maintained at a saving to the state; and no hospitals save state institutions are mentioned. This chapter more than any other leaves on the reader the impression that the compiler's sympathies are on the side of state paternalism; whether true or not, the impression is left that what the state has not done has not been done. And it is to be regretted that the defect of this principle is not altogether counteracted by the special articles.

The chapter on the later political history is but a record of reforms—space forbids detailed accounts—imperatively forced on the legislators by the pell-mell rush of things in the uncontrolled development and exploitation of the immense natural resources of the state. There was illegal procedure in elections and corruption in legislation to further the schemes of speculators, avoidance of just taxation by the large corporations, neglect of civic obligations, oppression of labor; but the record is one that indicates a steadily growing sense of responsibility on the part of the legislators, and, a thorough awakening of the civic conscience to the imperative needs of the communities, the health and morals of the inhabitants.

The Inter-State Relations have to do with the boundary disputes with Maryland and the Virginia Debt Question, both arising from the previous relations of mother and daughter state.

A very interesting monograph showing early struggles and ideas is the Wheeling-Pittsburg rivalry for the head-water trade of the Ohio River.

The Articles on the Development and Resources of West Virginia are of great value. More than history proper could, these articles enable the reader to appreciate the value of the records of the state and the glorious prospects before it in its second semi-centennial round of life. They describe the various natural resources, the coal, oil, gas, timber, game, agriculture, the water power and industrial development, the progress of transportation, postal and telephone service, commercial,

municipal, judicial organization, the advance in education, journalism, medicine, and the church development of the Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Catholics.

There is an index to the historical part and a bibliography of wide range, including newspapers, state documents, publications of societies, histories, lives, travels, and journals extending over the entire history of the state previous and subsequent to its adoption into the Union.
